

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A material handling vehicle, comprising:
an operator compartment;
a fore operator control handle for selecting a direction and a speed of travel, the fore control handle being mounted at a first end of the operator compartment and configured for operation in a fore vehicle direction;
an aft operator control handle for selecting a direction and a speed of travel, the aft operator control handle comprising a twist grip handle mounted to a second end of the compartment and configured for operation in the aft vehicle direction; and
a traction system controlled by the first and second operator control handles to drive the lift truck in a selected direction, wherein an operator can control the traction system while facing either of the first or the second end of the compartment.
2. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the first operator control handle is a multi-function control handle.
3. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the second operator control handle includes a smooth outer grip.
4. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 3, wherein the smooth outer grip is a thermoplastic.

5. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the second handle includes recessed grooves.
6. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, further comprising a floor in the compartment, and a floor switch mounted to the floor in a position accessible by an operator using either the fore control handle or the aft control handle.
7. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the aft operator control is mounted at an angle as referenced to the side of the compartment selected to be substantially perpendicular of the arm of the operator when operating the control.
8. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the aft operator control further comprising a steering wheel mounted to the compartment, the steering wheel being positioned on the compartment in a location to allow an operator to rotate the steering wheel when using either the fore control handle or the aft control handle.
9. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the aft control handle is mounted to the compartment a distance from the floor selected to provide a comfortable grip for users of varying heights.
10. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 9 wherein the distance from the floor is substantially thirty-eight inches.
11. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the an aft operator control handle includes a horn actuator for activating a horn.

12. An operator compartment for a material handling vehicle comprising:
a first control handle mounted for access by an operator facing a first direction;
a second control handle mounted for access by an operator facing a second direction,
the second control handle being mounted to be a distance from a floor of the compartment
and at an angle referenced to a side of the compartment selected to be perpendicular to the
arm of the operator while in use;

a floor switch positioned on a floor of the compartment in a location selected to be
accessible by an operator using either the first control handle or the second control handle;
and

a steering wheel positioned in the compartment in a location selected to be accessible
by an operator using either the first control handle or the second control handle, wherein the
first handle is rotational in the first direction for motion in a first vehicle direction and the
second handle is rotatable in the second direction for motion in a second vehicle direction.

13. The material handling vehicle of claim 12, wherein the first and second vehicle
directions are the fore and aft directions of the vehicle.

14. The material handling vehicle of claim 12 wherein the second control handle is
substantially horizontal.

15. The material handling vehicle of claim 12 wherein the distance from a floor is
substantially thirty-eight inches.

16. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 12, wherein the first and second control handles are each rotational around a substantially horizontal axis.

17. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 12, wherein each of the first and second control handles are rotational in the second and first directions, respectively, to provide a control signal indicative of motion in the direction opposite the direction the operator is facing.

18. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 12, wherein the second control handle is a twist grip handle.

19. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 13, wherein the angle is substantially seventy degrees.

20. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 13, wherein the second control handle comprises a horn actuator.

21. A lift truck, comprising:

a fork;

an operator station from which the operator drives the lift truck, the operator station being at least partially surrounded by an enclosure;

a fore operator control mounted for access on the enclosure, the first operator control being provided adjacent the fork and configured for an operator facing the fork to select a direction travel;

an aft operator control mounted for access on the enclosure, the aft operator control comprising a twist grip handle provided near an end of the compartment opposite the forks and configured to be substantially perpendicular to the arm of the operator while controlling the aft handle to drive the lift truck in an aft direction;

a steering mechanism mounted for access on the enclosure, the steering mechanism being accessible by an operator to select a direction of motion while controlling either the fore or the aft control handle; and

a traction system connected to at least one of the fore and aft control handles to receive the control signal indicative of a direction of travel.

22. The lift truck as defined in claim 21, wherein the aft control handle is mounted in the operator compartment for access during aft stance operation.

23. The lift truck as defined in claim 21, wherein the aft control handle includes a smooth outer coating.

24. The lift truck as defined in claim 21, wherein the aft control handle is mounted at a height selected to be comfortable for operators of varying heights.

25. The lift truck as defined in claim 21, wherein the aft operator control includes grooves for improving gripping.

26. The lift truck as defined in claim 21, wherein the twist grip operator control is positioned to provide stability to an operator facing the end of the lift truck opposite the fork.

27. The lift truck as defined in claim 21, wherein the twist grip operator control is rotational to provide movement in either of a fore or an aft direction of travel.

28. The lift truck as defined in claim 21, wherein the twist grip operator control includes a horn actuator for actuating a horn.